

D'AUBUISSON SAYS HE WASN'T IN PLOT

Salvadoran Thinks There Was
a Plan to Kill U.S. Envoy
but Denies Involvement

By HEDRICK SMITH

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WASHINGTON, June 27 — Roberto d'Aubuisson, the Salvadoran rightist, said today that he believed there had been a plot to assassinate the United States Ambassador to El Salvador but that he was not involved. He told reporters he had "helped to avoid such a terrible thing" by denouncing it in public.

In a closed meeting with about a dozen senators, Mr. d'Aubuisson, who lost the presidential runoff election on May 5 to José Napoleón Duarte, reportedly charged that the election was "fraudulent" but promised nonetheless to accept the results.

When reporters later asked him if this meant he would support President Duarte, he replied: "Yes, always, if he is within the Constitution. This decision was made by our party. This way we make good things for our country."

Mr. d'Aubuisson's appearance here, after he was denied American entry visas in June 1980, November 1983 and last February, touched off a sharp, largely partisan controversy on Capitol Hill.

Some Democrats said it was "reprehensible" for the Administration to admit Mr. d'Aubuisson in view of intelligence information that some of his associates were involved plotting the assassination of Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering and repeated reports linking Mr. d'Aubuisson to right-wing terrorism in El Salvador.

Some Republicans Persuaded

Conservative Republicans said Mr. d'Aubuisson, leader of El Salvador's rightist National Republican Alliance, was being unfairly subjected to unfounded accusations. Several came away from his 90-minute session at the Capitol saying he was persuasive in taking on what one called "every tough question in the book" and denying all charges against him.

Late this afternoon, Mr. d'Aubuisson met for 45 minutes with Langhorne A. Motley, Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs, to discuss his party's role in El Salvador. Mr. Motley was a key figure in the Administration's decision to grant Mr. d'Aubuisson's visa as part of what officials describe as an effort to draw the former Salvadoran Army major into the democratic political system there.

In that effort and also to placate American political conservatives, President Reagan was reported by a Government source to have written a warm personal letter to Mr. d'Aubuisson shortly after he lost the runoff election to President Duarte.

One Democrats Attends

Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska, the Republican whip, said he invited all 100 senators to meet with Mr. d'Aubuisson today. But every Democrat except Russell B. Long of Louisiana boycotted the session, as did a large majority of Republicans, including the majority leader, Howard H. Baker Jr. of Tennessee, and Charles H. Percy of Illinois, the Foreign Relations Committee chairman. Mr. Stevens, evidently anticipating a small turnout, reserved a relatively small room.

Voicing the views echoed by others, Senator Robert C. Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, the minority leader, told reporters that he was not meeting with Mr. d'Aubuisson "because he's tied to death squads and this plot to assassinate a U.S. Ambassador."

After a briefing by the Central Intelligence Agency on the plot, Mr. Byrd said he regarded these reports as "very, very serious" and found it "rather strange" that the Administration would grant Mr. d'Aubuisson a visa after denying it previously.

'Search for Respectability'

"I don't think many senators would want to legitimize his visit, his search for respectability," the West Virginia Democrat said.

But Senator John P. East, Republican of North Carolina, accused Mr. D'Aubuisson's critics of "stacking the rhetorical deck against him" by repeatedly accusing him, without conclusive evidence, of links to death squads and the plot to assassinate Ambassador Pickering.

"I call it cheap, left-wing McCarthyism," Mr. East said. "It's the same old story. You repeat a big lie often enough and people begin to believe it. There is no proof of it. The C.I.A. doesn't have

any proof. No one has any proof."

But Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, who had been Mr. d'Aubuisson's most outspoken defender and political patron on Capitol Hill, seemed to back away from that role today. Facing sharp attacks from Gov. Jim Hunt, his senatorial opponent, for connections with Mr. d'Aubuisson, Senator Helms told reporters today that he was not acting in any way as host for the Salvadoran leader.

As he arrived for the Senate session, Mr. d'Aubuisson was asked by reporters about charges that he was involved in the plot against Ambassador Pickering. Officials have reported that the Ambassador is at an undisclosed location on vacation, but also under close security guard because of fears that the assassination attempt might take place in this country.

"I have not been in any plot," Mr. d'Aubuisson answered through an interpreter. "I helped to avoid such a terrible thing that could have happened against Ambassador Pickering."

"I do believe there was a plot against the Ambassador," the Salvadoran said. "I gave a press conference in San Salvador that anything that could have happened like this would be avoided."